ensuring transparency in the figures of viewership, the revenue collection and providing choice to the consumers, Government has introduced CAS. Implementation of CAS is in public interest for the following reasons:—

(i) Government has specified Rs. 72/- (Plus taxes) as the maximum price of basic service tier, consisting of not less than 30 free-to-air channels of different genres of entertainment, news, sports, children's programmes and music. Additional free-to-air channels would also be available to subscribers within the maximum amount mentioned.

(ii) Consumers will have the choice to pay for only those pay channels which they choose to watch.

(iii) Will have control over the content, they wish to view.

(iv) It has been made obligatory for cable operators to make provisions for rent, security deposit, repair and maintenance of Set Top Boxes (STB).

(v) Some MSOs/Cable Operators have come out with consumer friendly schemes through which the STBs will be made available to consumers.

(vi) Government has reduced the duty on import of STB and its components to make the STB more affordable.

Set Top Boxes

1587. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Set Top Boxes have paved the way for telecom giants to launch distribution of television signals through their network;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the names of such companies;

(c) whether the existing licensing framework for telecom companies allows them to offer voice, data and video from the same

provider and if so, the cost thereof alongwith the cost of the Set Top Boxes; and

(d) by when the consumers are to switch over from cable to CAS/STB regime and the amount of extra burden which would be on them as a result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) For implementation of CAS, Set Top Boxes are required to be provided to the consumers by MSOs/cable operators. Some of the MSOs involved in procurement and distribution of STBs in the four metros are Siti cable, Hathway, RPG Netcom Ltd. and Incable Net. STBs would be required to view all pay channels.

(c) and (d) The existing telecom companies providing voice services can also provide data and video services by taking the appropriate permission/licences as per the law.

Set Top Boxes (STBs) are a mechanism to provide "addressability" to the customer *i.e.* it enables the customer to choose which channels to watch and pay for. The technology and the cost of providing data and the video services by telecom companies differs from company to company, and is a matter the company's marketing/business strategy.

Those consumers who switch over to the CAS/STBs regime, would require a STB. With reduction in duties, the cost of STBs has been reduced and MSOs have declared various consumer-friendly schemes which could make the boxes available at affordable prices. The consumer would pay Rs. 72/- (Plus taxes) as the maximum price of basic service tier consisting of not less than 30 free-to-air channels of different genres of entertainment, news, sports, childrens's programmes and music and for the pay channels he would pay according to the number of channels which he actually views.